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United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific during the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre continued to promote dialogue and confidence-building in the region and beyond. The thirteenth United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues, held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, served as an important forum for discussing key challenges, at both the global and regional levels, facing the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and such emerging concerns as the development and use of lethal autonomous weapon systems. The Centre held a regional legal assistance workshop in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on 18 and 19 November 2014 to facilitate accession to and the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty by States in South-East Asia and the Pacific. It also held a two-day capacity-building workshop on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Arms Trade Treaty in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 17 and 18 June 2015. In addition, the Centre continued to carry out peace and disarmament education projects. Notably, the Centre's ability to assist Member States in the region was affected by the strong earthquakes that occurred in Nepal on 25 April and 12 May 2015. In order to ensure that the Centre could continue to carry out its planned work programme and operations in a timely and effective manner, it was decided to relocate it to Bangkok for a period of 11 months. That decision was conveyed by note verbale to the Member States in the region. With support from Member States and other partners, the Centre plans to continue expanding its programmes to provide assistance, upon request, to Member States and other stakeholders in the region to strengthen their capacity to implement global agreements in the fields of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

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The Regional Centre depends solely upon voluntary financial contributions to implement its programmatic activities. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to Member States, including the host country, Nepal, and other partners that have supported the Centre's operations and programmes with financial and in-kind support. He calls upon countries in the region and beyond to make voluntary contributions to the Centre to ensure the sustainability of its activities and operations and to enable it to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/39 D, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific is mandated to provide, upon request, substantive support for initiatives and other activities mutually agreed upon by Member States in Asia and the Pacific for the implementation of measures for peace and disarmament through the appropriate utilization of available resources. The Regional Centre facilitates and coordinates the implementation of regional activities of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Asia and the Pacific.

2. In its resolution 69/68, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction at the activities carried out in the past year by the Regional Centre and reaffirmed its strong support for the role of the Centre in the promotion of activities of the United Nations at the regional level to strengthen peace, stability and security among the Member States in Asia and the Pacific. It also expressed its gratitude to the Government of the host country, Nepal, for its cooperation and financial support. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventieth session on its implementation.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to the above-mentioned request and covers the activities of the Regional Centre during the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the Regional Centre for the first year of the biennium 2014-2015 is contained in the annex to the present report.

II. Activities of the Regional Centre

4. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre focused its programmatic activities on the following areas: promoting the implementation of global disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, including by assisting national capacity-building; enhancing dialogue and confidence-building in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and regional security; and carrying out outreach and advocacy initiatives.

A. Promoting the implementation of global disarmament and non-proliferation instruments

5. In the lead-up to the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, the Regional Centre held a regional legal assistance workshop in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on 18 and 19 November 2014. The workshop focused on facilitating the process of the signature and ratification of and accession to the Treaty. Representatives from 13 Member States in Asia and the Pacific attended the meeting, which was hosted by the Government of Cambodia, with financial and in-kind support from the Governments of Australia and New Zealand. At the workshop, participants assessed the gaps that needed to be addressed in order to align their respective national legislation with the Treaty obligations. International and regional legal experts provided information and insight on the challenges concerning arms export legislation as well as on potential assistance measures.

6. The Regional Centre, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, held a two-day capacity-building workshop on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Arms Trade Treaty on 17 and 18 June 2015 in Dhaka. The workshop brought together 40 government officials from various national ministries and agencies to discuss the policies, practices and technical issues relating to combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The workshop served to assist Bangladesh in enhancing its national capacity to implement the Programme of Action and to meet the import, export and transfer standards of conventional arms stipulated in the Arms Trade Treaty. In addition, an overview of the International Tracing Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Small Arms Control Standards and the related assessment tool was provided to the participants. The workshop also included technical training focused on the sharing of best practices for the safe management of stockpiles and for recordkeeping with respect to weapons and ammunition. To further ensure long-term sustainability, a package of key background documents on small arms and light weapons was prepared in the national language of Bangla as a resource for government officials. The event was supported financially by the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

7. The Centre also participated in and contributed substantively to the fifth regional training-of-trainers workshop in the Pacific on the International Small Arms Control Standards and the related assessment tool, held by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in cooperation with the International Small Arms Control Standards Inter-Agency Support Unit and in partnership with regional organizations in Wellington, New Zealand, from 2 to 5 December 2014. The workshop provided training to participants from Pacific island States on the preparation of national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

8. In collaboration with the Government of Cambodia, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, supported by the Regional Centre, held a regional workshop on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) for States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) from 15 to 17 October 2014 in Phnom Penh. Special emphasis was given to the effective physical protection and accounting of related materials under the resolution. The regional workshop was realized with the financial support of Norway, the Republic of Korea, the United States of America and the European Union. The workshop brought together participants from government ministries and agencies as well as civil society organizations to discuss key issues, including challenges in the national implementation of the resolution.

9. The Centre also contributed substantively to the regional workshop on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), organized by the Governments of the Philippines and Canada, which was held in Manila on 24 and 25 July 2014. The workshop provided an opportunity to share among participants effective practices for the implementation of the resolution in the region, and facilitated the identification of capacity-building measures that would be responsive to regional and specific national requirements.

B. Promoting dialogue and confidence in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and regional security

10. Continuing the Jeju Process on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, the Regional Centre and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea held the thirteenth United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues, on 4 and 5 December 2014 in Jeju, Republic of Korea. Approximately 50 senior representatives from Governments, intergovernmental organizations, policy institutes and academic institutions participated in the Conference, whose theme was "Looking ahead: opportunities and challenges in disarmament and non-proliferation". The Conference focused on the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, discussing, in particular, possible ingredients for the Treaty's success as well as key challenges. Participants also addressed specific disarmament and non-proliferation concerns of the region. In addition, the Conference addressed the potential dangers of lethal autonomous weapon systems, and the participants debated how to regulate their development and use. The Conference served as an important forum for engaging members of the international disarmament community in frank and informal discussions on key challenges in the areas of disarmament and arms control, contributing to confidence-building as well as to efforts to seek solutions to complex questions in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation.

C. Partnership, outreach and peace and disarmament education

11. The Regional Centre participated in and contributed substantively to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Hiroshima Training Programme on Nuclear Disarmament for South-East Asia for young diplomats from South-East Asia, which was held in Hiroshima City, Japan, from 8 to 12 June 2015. The Programme was organized as a peace and disarmament education project by UNITAR Hiroshima, in cooperation with UNIDIR, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Japan Foundation and the municipal government of Hiroshima. The Programme provided the participants with a better understanding of global and regional nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues as well as a training opportunity to improve their negotiation skills. In total, 10 junior to mid-level diplomats from five States of South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand) participated in the training programme.

12. From December 2014 to June 2015, the Regional Centre continued its assistance to the Ministry of Education of Nepal in integrating peace and disarmament education into the national curriculum and textbooks. In the framework of phase II of the Peace and Disarmament Programme for Nepal, the Centre organized four workshops, which provided training and technical support for government officials on the development of new peace and disarmament lessons for national grade-nine textbooks, capacity-building for government personnel in charge of preparing peace and disarmament materials, the drafting of a model optional course on peace and disarmament education for middle and high schools and the preparation of peace and disarmament lessons, classroom materials and other teaching tools for a teachers' guide. Those educational initiatives are expected to reach an estimated 400,000 teenagers nationwide per year and help to cultivate and strengthen a culture of peace for future generations.

13. In July 2014, the Regional Centre organized its third children's art competition in Nepal, under the theme "The right to peace", which was based on the United Nations theme for the 2014 International Day of Peace. More than 450 students from six schools in the Kathmandu Valley participated in the competition. The project culminated in an awards ceremony. Through their drawings, the schoolchildren contemplated their personal relationship to peace and conflict, which is an important issue in the transformation of a post-conflict society.

14. The Regional Centre continued its efforts to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders in the region, including Member States, regional and subregional organizations, other United Nations entities and civil society, through its concerted communications and outreach effort as well as through joint initiatives and collaborative projects. In that context, the Centre enhanced its partnerships with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum through, inter alia, information exchange and invitations to officials of those organizations to events organized by the Centre.

15. The Regional Centre continued its outreach and advocacy efforts to ensure the regular provision of accurate and timely information about its work and about disarmament issues in general, in particular through its website as well as through social media.

D. Future activities

16. The Regional Centre plans to expand the scope of its work programme to provide practical assistance to Member States in the region, at their request, especially in the areas of training, technical assistance and capacity-building, in particular regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action, the Arms Trade Treaty and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Those efforts will include the following:

(a) In order to promote the ratification of and broader accession to the Arms Trade Treaty by States in Asia and the Pacific, as well as its future implementation, the Centre will continue to facilitate regional dialogue on the Treaty and assist States, upon request, in their efforts to prepare for their accession and to build their capacity to implement the Treaty, including through technical and legal assistance;

(b) The Centre will address specific requests of Member States to assist them with their implementation of the Programme of Action, as identified in their relevant submitted national reports;

(c) The Centre plans to continue its support for international efforts to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The Centre will work with States in the region to ensure the submission of initial reports to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), and to assist States in developing their national plans to implement the resolution;

(d) The Centre will continue working with Member States in the region to promote dialogue and confidence-building through the organization of the annual major conferences on disarmament, non-proliferation and regional security.

III. Staffing and financing

17. Three posts of the Regional Centre are funded from the regular budget: the Director (P-5) and one Professional (P-3) and one General Service (G-7) staff member. The host country, Nepal, through its voluntary contribution, provided two local support staff. In addition, Japan provided the Centre with one Junior Professional Officer (until the end of October 2014) and, since March 2015, with one United Nations Volunteer. Finland provided one United Nations Volunteer (until 30 September 2014). Switzerland continued to provide one United Nations Youth Volunteer.

18. The Regional Centre relies on voluntary contributions for all of its substantive programmes and for a portion of its operating costs. The Secretary-General encourages other Member States to consider providing financial and in-kind contributions to the Centre.

19. In 2014, voluntary contributions in the total amount of $526,192 were received from Member States. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Member States that made financial and in-kind contributions to the Regional Centre, including Australia, China, Finland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and Thailand, as well as to Rissho Kosei-kai of Japan. Such financial and in-kind contributions remain essential to ensuring the sustainability of the operations, core activities and programmes of the Centre. The Secretary-General urges all Member States, in particular those from the region, as well as other donors, to provide financial resources in support of the Centre's programmes, which benefit Asia and the Pacific.

IV. Conclusion

20. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre actively engaged in and supported peace and disarmament initiatives in Asia and the Pacific. Working with Member States and other stakeholders, it continued to fulfil its mandate to provide assistance, upon request, to Member States and to carry out outreach and advocacy activities. The Centre will expand the scope of its activities, as feasible, including identifying new and innovative modalities through which to provide practical support to Member States in the region. The annual conference held in the Republic of Korea continues to serve as an important forum for promoting dialogue and confidence-building in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and security. The Centre stands ready to expand its technical assistance to Member States in addressing the challenges they face in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation, as part of the efforts of the United Nations to promote peace, security and disarmament in the region and the world.

Annex

Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for 2014[a]

(United States dollars)

Reserves and fund balance, 1 January 2014	784 968
Income	
Voluntary contributions	526 192[b]
Interest income	4 229
Other/miscellaneous income	12 367[c]
Transfers from other funds	–
Total, income and transfers from other funds	**542 788**
Expenditure	485 295
Programme support costs	56 497
Refunds to donors	–
Total, expenditure and refunds	**541 792**
Reserves and fund balances, 31 December 2014	**785 964[d]**

[a] The status of funds is provided on a provisional basis, pending the release of the final financial statements. The figures provided in the present report are therefore subject to change.

[b] During the reporting period, contributions totalling $526,192 were received from Australia ($69,400), China ($50,000), Kazakhstan ($9,975), Nepal ($208,503), New Zealand ($65,115), the Republic of Korea ($43,600), Switzerland ($43,587) and Thailand ($3,000), as well as the Swiss Agency for Development, ($33,012).

[c] Represents refund of prior-period expenditure.

[d] Consists of reserves and fund balance as at 1 January 2014, plus income received and transfers from other funds in 2014, less expenditure incurred and refunds made during the year.